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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

NATO ENLARGEMENT IS THE DOOR REALLY OPEN TO ALL?

BY

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Is the door really open to all?

by

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ABSTRACT

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Following the end of the Cold War, political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic called for an end to the NATO Alliance.

Less than a decade later, NATO members are considering whether or not to enlarge the alliance. In July 1997, the heads of state of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's sixteen member nations met in Madrid and agreed on plans to enlarge the alliance. The NATO leadership considered twelve countries from Eastern and Central Europe for new membership. Inviting only three to join the alliance, they reassured the remaining nine countries that NATO would remain open to additional membership in the future.

There are many arguments that can be used to justify enlargement, but the continued strength of the NATO Alliance is the most important consideration. NATO should enlarge not to provide a security umbrella for emerging democracies or to erase the memories of old dividing lines. NATO should enlarge to become stronger and more capable of dealing with the collective security challenges of the 21st Century. In doing so, difficult decisions must be made concerning which countries can contribute meaningfully to the alliance and whether the alliance is truly open to all.

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NATO ENLARGEMENT Is the door really open to all?

The bottom line is clear: Expanding NATO will enhance our security. It is the right thing to do. We must not fail history's challenge at this moment to build a Europe peaceful, democratic, and undivided, allied with us to face new security threats of the new century – a Europe that will avoid repeating the darkest moments of the 20^{th} century and fulfill the brilliant possibilities of the 21^{st} .

- President Clinton

In July 1997, the heads of state of the North Atlantic
Treaty Organization's sixteen member nations met in Madrid and
agreed on plans to enlarge the alliance. The NATO leadership
considered twelve countries from Eastern and Central Europe for
new membership, but invited only three to begin accession talks - Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. NATO leaders
reassured the remaining nine countries that "enlargement is a
process not an event" and that "the door to NATO will remain
open" to additional membership in the future. NATO enlargement
supports U.S. interests and is a valuable initiative to the
extent that it strengthens the alliance, but enlarging too far or
too fast risks diminishing the alliance's strength. Although the
door may appear to remain open, current geopolitical realities
and practical concerns suggest NATO should not and cannot be open
to all.

Enlargement Concepts

Only a few years ago, many political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic called for an end to the NATO Alliance. The Cold War was over. The threat was gone and NATO was no longer needed. Countries sought to capitalize on the peace dividend by reducing military expenditures and investing the expected savings in areas other than defense. However, as the euphoria over the post-Cold War peace ebbed, new threats to European security became evident. Instead of fading into history, NATO changed and adapted to the new security environment. Today, NATO remains relevant to the European security architecture and continues to be the centerpiece of American foreign policy in Europe. Now, less than a decade after the end of the Cold War, both European and American leaders are calling for the alliance's enlargement rather than seeking its dissolution.

NATO enlargement involves two major changes to the organization, an enlargement of the alliance's mission and an enlargement of the alliance's membership. Enlargement of the mission includes accepting responsibilities for tasks beyond the alliance's original charter for collective defense and for tasks outside of the borders of current members. Although Europeans may be reluctant to embrace security issues outside their borders, the nature of future threats will force them to do so. An example of such an outward focus and the resulting enlarged mission is the current peacekeeping operation in Bosnia.

Enlargement of the alliance also involves the admission of new nations into the organization. Who should become members of the expanded alliance and how quickly new members can be integrated into the alliance are complicated questions without clear answers. Both aspects of NATO enlargement advance the United States' vital national interests and enhance NATO's ability to accomplish its fundamental task of ensuring a more peaceful and secure Europe.

United States' Interests in Europe

There is little doubt that the peace and the security of Europe have been and continue to be vitally important to the United States. America's security is inextricably linked to European stability. The United States expended huge resources to restore or maintain stability and protect its national interests in Europe during World War One, World War Two, and the Cold War. In 1995, the United States again demonstrated its interest in maintaining European stability by assuming the leading role in seeking a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Bosnia.

The 1997 National Security Strategy, A National Security

Strategy for a New Century, lists six strategic priorities.

America's first priority is to foster a peaceful, undivided and democratic Europe. The United States has at least six key security interests in Europe. They are: (1) to ensure free, secure peaceful and cooperative Europe, (2) to maintain mutual

security commitments and a strong adaptive NATO, (3) to encourage European integration consistent with open relations with the United States and NATO, (4) to promote successful reform and increased security for Central and Eastern Europe, (5) to maintain access to military facilities in Europe and the North Atlantic, and (6) to help prevent, contain, and resolve ethnic conflicts.²

In addition to security interests, America has enduring economic, political, and ideological interests in Europe. Some European countries have been and remain today America's best allies. Many European countries are the most politically, economically, and militarily advanced countries in the world. European states outnumber any other region in the United Nations Security Council, the G-7 Economic Summit, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). They influence international politics, international trade, and worldwide commerce. As such, their individual and collective actions influence American interests not only in Europe but also around the world.

America also has deep cultural ties to Europe. Europeans colonized America and are responsible for many of Americans' basic beliefs concerning government, law, and individual rights. Currently, the majority of families in the United States trace their heritage to European roots. The 1990 Census indicated that 57 percent of the total population in America claim European

heritage.⁵ Despite being separated by the Atlantic Ocean,
Europeans and Americans generally agree on a wide range of issues
such as respect for human rights, self governance,
nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), organized
crime, drugs, and the furtherance of democracy.⁶

A Different Threat

Even though the Cold War is over, Europe is still not a continent of peace and security. Old threats are largely gone, but new threats have replaced them. The threat of a massive armored attack from the east has vanished. With the exception of Greece and Turkey, open conflict between Western European countries has all but disappeared.

New threats to the United States' interests and Europe's security have emerged that are vastly different than the threats of fifty or even ten years ago. These new threats are more diverse and complex than ever before. The end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe changed the strategic environment and made it much more complicated. Old ethnic and nationalistic rivalries have resurfaced and have created political and economic uncertainties throughout the region. Other new threats are manifested in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the increased availability of ballistic missiles, ethnic fragmentation, regional instability

and conflicts, terrorism, drugs, organized crime, mass migrations resulting from ethnic conflicts and instability in North Africa, and dwindling energy resources.

These new threats are harder to identify, isolate and combat. They affect individual countries to different degrees. Unlike the old threat from the Soviet Union, the new threats tend to produce disunity rather than unity of purpose and action. As a result, countries in Europe often have very different perspectives on individual and regional security issues. Northern and Western European states tend to focus on potential problems associated with instability in Eastern Europe. Mediterranean states tend to be more concerned about the potential for problems due to the instabilities to the south in North Africa and the Middle East. Meanwhile, Central and Eastern European states remain concerned about actual and perceived threats from Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union.

NATO Enlargement and the Protection of American Interests

The United States must remain involved in Europe to assist in constructing a truly integrated democratic and secure Europe and to protect both its European and worldwide interests. 12 It is the NATO Alliance that gives America its greatest power to influence European issues. Therefore, NATO continues to be important to the United States today despite the lack of a Cold War threat.

Just as the early NATO successfully defended a line against an old threat, a new, enlarged NATO serves to defend against the asymmetric threats of the future. The NATO Alliance continues to serve as Europe's principal provider of security and remains critically important to the United States. This "transatlantic partnership" remains the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy for three reasons: (1) NATO is America's most powerful military alliance, (2) trade and investment flows with Europe are vitally important to American industries and the economy, and (3) shared values give America and the other NATO nations great weight in shaping the broader global agenda.¹³

Maintaining strong transatlantic ties with European allies is the best way to assure European security, to keep the U.S. engaged, and to provide for a forum for the exercise of U.S. leadership in Europe. 14 NATO binds Europe and North America together. It is an important organization because it has both real military and political power. Without NATO, the United States' ability to exert leadership and influence in Europe would be severely curtailed. As such, a strong and unified NATO is important to America's ability to protect both its European and its global interests.

Enlarging NATO is consistent with stated U.S. policies and will help promote U.S. interests in Europe and throughout the world. NATO enlargement will promote democracy, increase stability, and reduce the risk of conflict throughout Europe. It

will build confidence and give new governments a powerful incentive to continue on the road to democratization and free enterprise. Enlargement will also improve NATO's ability to deal with regional and European-wide security issues.

A stronger and larger NATO will be better able to share with the United States the responsibilities and burdens of promoting worldwide security. NATO's involvement in missions outside NATO boundaries will enable Europeans to accept more responsibility for European and global security. The more NATO countries share the burden of maintaining peace and security on the European continent and throughout the world, the less the United States will have to do alone.

Central and Eastern Europe Look West

The countries of Eastern and Central Europe want to join NATO for two primary reasons. First, they see membership in NATO as an affirmation that they are now a part of the West instead of a part of the East. Second, they fear Russia.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have sought to redefine their identity. To many Europeans, "The East" is widely associated with backwardness, poverty, a lack of freedom, and foreign domination. Conversely, "The West" is associated with wealth, freedom, independence, and security. 17

The memory of Russian domination and the fear of even a weakened Russia remain as significant issues in Central and Eastern European security thinking. For centuries, Russian power, culture, and interests have directly, decisively and negatively influenced virtually all the peoples in Central and Eastern Europe. Eastern Europeans largely feel that if democracy fails in Russia, all the emerging democracies in the region will be threatened. The West may perceive Russian President Yeltsin's incursion in Chechnya as simply a mistake, but Eastern Europeans see it as proof that Russia has not lost its imperialistic attitude. Inflammatory statements made by Russian radicals like Vladimir Zhirinovsky further reinforce their perceptions.

NATO's Previous Enlargements

The current proposal to enlarge the alliance has generated quite a debate, but the idea of enlarging NATO is not new. The original treaty consisted of only twelve members, the United States, Canada, France, Great Britain, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Portugal and Italy. The treaty was subsequently expanded on three occasions to reach its current membership of sixteen nations — in 1952 with the addition of Greece and Turkey, in 1955 with the addition of the Federal Republic of Germany, and in 1982 with the addition of Spain.

The composition of the alliance has been a contentious issue since its very beginning. Countries have been brought into and rejected from NATO for a variety of reasons, but the predominate motivation behind previous enlargements has always been to strengthen the strategic position of the alliance. The NATO Alliance was first formed when Western European countries, perceiving a threat from the Soviet Union, sought security guarantees from the United States.

Initial discussions in 1948 revealed that the Europeans wanted to limit membership in the alliance to the core members of the Western Union (France, Great Britain and the Benelux), the United States, and Canada. Because of their strategic importance to the defense of Europe, the U.S. insisted on including Norway, Iceland, and Portugal in the alliance. 20 The Europeans did not consider Norway to be a suitable candidate for membership because its interests at the time conflicted with those of Belgium and Holland. They also did not consider Iceland and Portugal to be European. The Western Europeans initially considered Italy and Denmark to be too far from the Atlantic. 21 France argued that if Norway was admitted then Italy should also be admitted to maintain a balance between northern and southern European interests. Even the prospective members had doubts about joining the alliance. Norway and Denmark insisted they would join only with the assurance that no nuclear weapons or allied forces would be stationed on their territories. Iceland declined to commit

forces to the alliance. Portugal wanted to avoid any commitments that would complicate its relationship with Spain. 22 Strategic necessity dictated the membership in the original alliance.

The Western Union members saw themselves as a core with a group of associate partners surrounding the core. When they could not limit the number of partners, the Western Union countries attempted to limit the power and privileges of the "peripheral members" by restricting their decision-making authority. The United States did not support such an idea. Interestingly, the concept of an inner circle of members surrounded by an outer circle of associate members is very similar to the initial concepts of the Partnership for Peace program. The associate partners of the Partnership for Peace are provided the benefits of the consultative privileges described in Article IV of the Washington Treaty, but are not guaranteed the security benefits of Article V.

Turkey and Greece wanted to be a part of NATO and their expectations were raised by Italy's accession to the alliance. Both countries could contribute strategically to the alliance by virtue of their position on NATO's southern flank. Additionally, Turkey had a large military and the Greek civil war was a symbol of the fight against Communism. However, the allies were concerned about overextending their defense commitments and invited neither Turkey nor Greece to join the alliance. When the communist incursion in Korea occurred, western leaders were

convinced it was a precursor to a Soviet invasion of Europe.

NATO leaders began to organize Europe into defensible regions.

The strategic importance of Greece and Turkey thus became apparent, and they were invited to join the alliance. Turkey and Greece were invited to join NATO because they contributed to NATO's strength.

The accession of the Federal Republic of Germany was the most difficult and the most necessary enlargement of the alliance. Germany not only held a geostrategic position on the continent; it possessed vast resources and capabilities that could be important to the alliance. The NATO members decided that since Germany would benefit from a defense against communist aggression, Germany should make a contribution to the defense. Still, Germany's admission to the alliance was unacceptable to France largely because of animosities left over from the Second World War. To break the stalemate, Great Britain proposed and the allies agreed to allow Germany to enter the alliance by first becoming a member of the Western Union. Arguments against Germany's accession to NATO were overridden because Germany was strategically important to the alliance.

Spain began its quest for membership as an unofficial associate of the alliance. Its geographic position on the western edge of the Mediterranean complemented Turkey's position on the eastern edge and it could provide important air and naval bases to support the alliance. Franco's anti-Communist stance

made Spain attractive to the alliance, but Franco's support of Hitler in the Second World War prevented Spain's membership for years. 27 Spain initially resisted joining NATO, but strong encouragement from the United States led Spain to seek admission to NATO under an agreement similar to that of France. Spain would be a member of the alliance, but would not commit forces to the NATO military structure. 28 Spain's interest in NATO membership was stimulated by its desire to strengthen its democracy and its desire to join the European Economic Community. 29 However, the most important reason for Spain's admission to NATO was its potential for contributing to the strength of the alliance.

NATO's history indicates that there have been several different paths to membership, that old enemies can become new allies, and that even different ideologies can be overcome. It shows that different countries have had different reasons for joining and have made different commitments to the alliance. Most importantly, NATO's history demonstrates that strategic necessity and what would make the alliance stronger have determined previous decisions on admission. Earlier enlargements were conducted as a means to strengthen the NATO's strategic capability. Oddly, current proponents of enlargement tend to focus more on the idea that NATO enlargement will strengthen the governments and economies of new members rather than focusing on what will strengthen the alliance.

The Enlargement Debate

While there has been a great deal of debate concerning the wisdom and long term implications of enlarging NATO's membership, the debate has been confined largely to the world of foreign policy elites and academes. The American public appears to largely support the idea of enlargement. A recent poll conducted by the Pew Research Center indicates that 63 percent of Americans are in favor of NATO enlargement. According to a recent report in the Retired Officer Magazine, virtually all military and veterans groups support NATO enlargement. 31

The arguments most often presented for both sides of the current debate may be valid, but they are neither conclusive nor compelling. What appears to be missing from the current arguments in favor of enlargement is a coherent discussion concerning how each prospective new member can contribute to making the alliance stronger. Popular arguments for enlargement include: enlargement will erase Stalin's artificial dividing lines in Europe, the West encouraged the Eastern and Central European countries to break away from the Soviet Union and now must support them, and enlargement will make NATO more cohesive.

Enlargement erases old lines. The acceptance of new countries into the alliance may erase old lines created by the Yalta Conference at the end of the Second World War, but it also creates new dividing lines that may be just as significant. Instead of an old line separating Poland and Germany, a new line

will now run between Poland and Belarus. The line will simply move to the east. Enlargement not only creates a new line, it creates in some respects a circle. Significant issues may arise, as a result of enlargement, because the countries inside the circle will enjoy certain benefits that the countries left outside the circle will not enjoy.

The West encouraged the Eastern and Central European countries to break away from the Soviet Union and now should support or reward them. Western leaders should not feel guilty about winning the Cold War. The West encouraged countries to trade communism for democracy because it is a better form of government and a better way of life. Western governments should help emergent democracies, but membership in the alliance is not the only way and may not be the best way to strengthen new governments and their economies.

Enlargement will make NATO stronger and more cohesive.

Enlargement will potentially make NATO less cohesive not more.

Bigger is not necessarily better. Enlargement will strengthen

NATO only to the extent that new members bring more to the

alliance than they take from it.

Opponents of enlargement seem to have developed as many arguments against enlargement as proponents have developed for it. Their arguments are also not convincing. Popular arguments against enlargement include: it will cost too much, it will antagonize Russia, it will commit us to defending cities in

Eastern Europe or dilute the provisions of Article V, and NATO is strictly a military alliance.

Enlargement will cost too much. The cost of enlargement is certainly important and is a large part of the debate. The lack of a visible threat, competing domestic demands, and economic recession make cost an issue. Still, cost should not be a defining issue. Current cost estimates vary wildly and are difficult to compare. They are based on different assumptions about the time, the threat, the degree of modernization required, and the number of countries involved. The benefits of enlargement are as hard to quantify as the costs and a discussion of costs without a concurrent discussion of quantifiable benefits lacks utility. The real issue is not cost, but whether or not the U.S. and other NATO members are willing to commit resources to building the alliance at a time when most of the current NATO members are reducing defense expenditures. In the end, if the benefit is perceived to be great enough, the United States at least will bear the cost of enlargement.

Another side of the cost argument is that enlargement will be too expensive for prospective members. Some opponents of enlargement argue that the young democracies of Eastern and Central Europe would be better served spending money on developing industrial markets and infrastructure rather than improving their armed forces. NATO should make it clear to prospective members that there are costs associated with

membership and that the countries will not get a free ride. The taxpayers and elected officials of the new democracies should determine for themselves whether or not they can afford to join the alliance. Only the people of the prospective countries involved can determine the value of NATO membership and whether it is worth the cost to be a member of the alliance.

Enlargement will aggravate relations with Russia. Russian perceptions concerning NATO enlargement are important and should not be dismissed lightly. NATO cannot create security for Europe by creating insecurity for Russia and so should acknowledge Russia's legitimate security concerns. However, it is unlikely that Russian democracy will succeed or fail as a result of NATO enlargement. A policy of appeasement did not win the Cold War and it will not advance Europe's security in the future. NATO and the U.S. can shape Russian reactions by carefully managing the enlargement of the alliance.

Europe or will dilute the provisions of Article V. There is good reason to be concerned about extending to additional countries the defense guarantees of the Washington Treaty's Article V, but that is not a sufficiently valid reason for not enlarging the alliance. It did not prevent extending membership to Greece and Turkey in 1952 and it should not prevent enlargement now.

Article V states,

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all...³⁴

However, the wording of Article V goes on to say that each Party will assist the attacked Party by using,

...such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.³⁵

The provisions of Article V represent a serious commitment and served as the foundation of the alliance during the Cold War. However, Article V does not absolutely commit the United States to an automatic or specific response to an act of aggression. It was the nature of the threat not the wording of the Article that made assistance automatic during the Cold War. Undo concern over the intent of Article V should not prevent the enlargement of the Alliance.

NATO is strictly a military alliance. NATO has always been more than just a military alliance. In the presence of a clear threat, it was easy to focus primarily on NATO's military responsibilities. In the absence of a clear and present danger, it may be time to explore what NATO can and should do in the political arena as well.

The Open Door

At the conclusion of the Madrid Summit, the NATO heads of state announced that although only three countries had been invited to begin accession talks, the alliance would remain open to new members in the future. NATO's policy has always been that the alliance was open to additional members. Article X of the Washington Treaty states,

The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty.³⁷

There are practical political reasons for maintaining that the door to membership is still open. First, NATO is a democratic alliance; it must remain open to new members as a matter of principle. Second, insisting that the door is still open is intended to encourage prospective members to continue to reform in the direction NATO desires. Finally, NATO must avoid closing the door and implying that NATO is not interested in a specific country. To do so could possibly drive the country into a competing sphere of influence or invite aggression from a potential competitor.

The Door Cannot be Open to All

NATO overcame formidable obstacles to enlargement in the past, but some of its most difficult challenges may lie in the future. The idea of an organization open to all appeals to our

sense of altruism, but it is not a practical concept for a defense organization. NATO cannot be open to all because all of the Eastern and Central European countries cannot contribute meaningfully to the alliance. It cannot be open to all because the alliance would become so large that its ability to reach consensus would be jeopardized. It cannot be open to all because all Eastern and Central European countries may not be sufficiently committed to NATO's objectives. Finally, NATO cannot be open to all because the new NATO may not meet the needs or expectations of all Eastern and Central European countries.

In previous enlargements, new countries were brought into the alliance because they were geostrategically important and because they could contribute meaningfully to the alliance.

Unfortunately, instead of focusing on what countries can contribute to the alliance, NATO is primarily evaluating prospective new members by their progress toward achieving a set of pre-specified criteria. The criteria include being a stable democracy, having civilian control of the armed forces, possessing enough military capacity to contribute meaningfully to the alliance not simply to the country's own defense, and having no active disputes within or on the country's borders. When it comes to determining which Eastern and Central European countries should be invited to join the alliance, the issue should not simply be one of who can meet a list of pre-specified criteria.

The issue should be one of strategy and which countries can make the alliance stronger.

Unlike previous enlargements, the current enlargement will be conducted in an environment where there is no single, clear and present danger. Previous enlargements had one central theme — the Soviet threat. The Soviets were a threat to everyone. The new strategic environment is filled with a multitude of different threats. These new threats affect NATO members differently and produce disagreements about the severity, the consequences, and the response required. As a result, sixteen different nations produce sixteen different assessments of a given situation. Assuming the current threats remain unchanged, this problem will be exacerbated as NATO continues to enlarge.

It is intuitive that the larger the alliance, the more difficult the task of reaching consensus. The problem with consensus will not necessarily be due to the larger number of members, but instead to the increasingly diverse interests of the members. The diversity of interests will be exacerbated by the lack of a common, unifying threat. As a result, if enlargement is not pursued wisely, NATO will run the risk of becoming too cumbersome and unable to make effective, timely decisions.

NATO is a community of shared values and goals. Its strength lies in the solidarity and commitment of its members to a common ideal and purpose. The manner in which Eastern/Central

Europeans and current NATO allies frame problems and develop solutions is often different based on generations of history and cultural development. These differences will likely create problems inside the alliance. Currently, every member of NATO has a vote and every member has a veto. Such power, vested in a country that is not committed to NATO and its ideals, could irreparably harm the alliance and the United States' ability to achieve its goals.

Finally, the new NATO may be a different organization than the one that some Central and Eastern European countries desire to join. Central and Eastern European countries primarily seek membership in NATO to benefit from the security guarantees of Article V as a hedge against Russian opportunism and renewed imperialism. However, the new NATO is currently working to establish an open relationship with Russia. Inviting countries to join the alliance without fully understanding their interests and expectations could leave NATO with a group of members that are out of synch with new NATO imperatives. The end result could be an ineffective alliance that is paralyzed from within and incapable of developing an effective relationship with Russia.

Differences in interests and in the nature of the threat have already made the first enlargement difficult. Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were selected to join the alliance because they were the only three countries on which there was a broad consensus. Their accession into the alliance is not yet a

sure bet, but there will be intense political pressure to ratify the protocols of accession to demonstrate that NATO is truly open to new members from the East. Subsequent enlargements will be harder and will reveal more differences in the interests of all concerned parties.

When it comes to enlargement, how to deal with the Baltic States will be one of the alliance's toughest questions. 45
Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have participated actively in the Partnership for Peace program and are clearly interested in becoming members of both the European Union and NATO. However, Russia has controlled the Baltic States for most of the past two centuries and Russian leaders strongly oppose their membership in NATO.

The Baltic States should not and most likely will not be invited to join NATO given the current geopolitical environment. The Baltic States cannot overcome their strategic position. They are strategically important to Russia because they allow access to the Baltic Sea and because they are situated between Russia and Kaliningrad. The Baltic States are not strategically important to NATO. They cannot guarantee their own security and neither can NATO. They do not have sufficient forces to contribute meaningfully to the alliance. They currently have a host of problematic security issues arising from unresolved border disputes, policies toward Russian minorities, and access to Kaliningrad. Finally and maybe most importantly, they

currently lack political support from the major European powers.⁴⁷

Ukraine also presents a particular problem for NATO.

Ukraine is strategically important because of its size,
geography, and strategic location. It will become strategically
more important in the future and its security orientation will
have a critical impact on NATO. Ukraine is an active
participant in the Partnership for Peace Program and has
strengthened its democratic institutions. It has not expressed a
desire to join NATO, but it also does not want to be left in a
gray zone between Russia and the West. Ukraine is the third
largest recipient of U.S. aid, but it remains deeply tied to
Russia economically, politically, and culturally. Membership in
NATO is unlikely for the foreseeable future, but Ukraine and NATO
have established a bilateral agreement to conduct regular
consultations.

NATO's relationship with Russia will continue to be an issue. President Clinton has suggested that, given the proper conditions, even Russia might someday be admitted to NATO. Given the current geopolitical situation, however, Russia should not be offered the opportunity to join the alliance. Russian membership would dilute NATO to the point of making it irrelevant. The alliance would cease to be a serious instrument of European security and would cease to provide the strong link that binds the United States and Europe. The current "special"

relationship" between Russia and NATO seems a viable mechanism by which to consider Russian sensitivities while avoiding diluting NATO efficiency.

The NATO alliance is not a panacea for all of Europe's problems. It cannot right every wrong, protect every minority, or guarantee every border. Although NATO is more than just a military alliance, it can contribute only so much and only indirectly to building new economies and new democracies.

Admitting too many countries to NATO would cripple the alliance and render it little different from other oversized and unwieldy political organizations. Given the current geopolitical environment, NATO would risk losing much of its value as a security organization if it attempted to admit all the countries of Eastern and Central Europe.

Conclusion

NATO enlargement is a process not an event and many things will shape the European continent and the world in the years to come. NATO enlargement will most likely have different effects on the interests of the United States, but it is unlikely that all U.S. interests will be influenced equally or even positively. Therefore, the United States and NATO must make some hard choices. To the extent that NATO enlargement promotes stability in Central and Eastern Europe, it will contribute to U.S. interests. It will strengthen confidence and long term

security in the countries that are invited, but it will likely create insecurity and inferiority in the countries that are left out and may make relations with Russia more difficult. In the final analysis, it will not be the act of enlargement but rather the handling of the enlargement that will be important to the continued success of the alliance.

NATO enlargement carries with it significant risks. If it goes too fast, it may upset the delicate political process in Russia and tear NATO apart from inside. ⁵⁴ If it goes too slowly, Western members may lose interest, Eastern candidates may become frustrated and the initiative may lose momentum or stall completely. ⁵⁵

Foreign policy is not a science. Cause and effect relationships are infinitely complex and often unclear. Sometimes decisions have undesirable and unintended consequences that cannot be foreseen. No one can be absolutely sure what the final result of NATO enlargement will be. Nevertheless, NATO must develop a realistic, long-range enlargement strategy designed to strengthen the alliance while maximizing the positive effects and minimizing the negative effects of enlargement. Given what we know today, it will be better to move forward having made a decision than be left behind leaving the future to chance. NATO and the United States cannot wait for Russia to sort out its problems, but cannot proceed without considering Russia's legitimate concerns and place in the New World order.

There are many arguments that could be used to justify enlargement, but the continued strength of the NATO Alliance is the most important consideration. NATO should enlarge not to provide an umbrella for emerging democracies or to erase the memories of old dividing lines that no longer exist. NATO should enlarge to become stronger and more capable of dealing with the collective security challenges of the 21st Century. In doing so, difficult decisions must be made concerning which countries can and cannot contribute meaningfully to the alliance. Expanding NATO for the right reason is the proper thing to do, but strategic vision, rational thought, and careful decisions should in the end determine if NATO can truly be open to all.

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